THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (c) At present there is no proposal which is pending for clearance pertaining to New Mumbai.

Derailments of Trains in Southern Railway

2127. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the frequent derailments of passenger and goods trains in the Southern Railway especially in the Palghat and Trivandrum Division;

(b) if so, the numbers of such derailments and the losses suffered due to such accidents; and

(c) the steps being taken to prevent the recurrence of such accidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) There were 19 derailments on Southern Railway, including 7 on Palghat and 3 on Trivandrum Division's during the period April 1996 to January 1997 as compared to 24, including 6 on Palghat and 4 on Trivandrum Divisions, during the corresponding period of last year. The cost of damage to railway property on account of accidents during the current year was Rs. 5.89 crores approximately.

(c) Some of the steps being taken to improve safety and bring down the number of accidents are as under:-

(i) Track maintenance on important routes is being done by the "On Track Tie Tampers".

(ii) For detection of hidden flaws in the rails not visible to the naked eye, ultrasonic flaw detectors have been deployed. In the critical sections, this testing of rails and welds is being done at more frequent intervals.

(iii) Carriage and Wagon examination of rolling stock has been strengthened and rationalised.

(iv) Pre-monsoon precautions are taken clear up all side and catch water drains.

(v) The performance of the staff is constantly monitored by frequent inspections, including those at night.

STD/ISD/PCO in West Bengal

2128. PROF. JITENDRA NATH DAS: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of STD/ISD/PCO booths working in West Bengal as on 31.12.1996, district-wise;

(b) the number of applications for allotment of such booths pending as on 31.12.1996 in the State, district-wise;

(c) the time by which it is likely to be cleared;

(d) whether the allotment is made strictly on eligibility;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether Co-operatives and women are eligible to get preference; and

(g) if not, whether the Government are considering to include these two categories in the preference list?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) to (g) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House as soon as possible.

Running of Trains from Guwahati/Dimapur to Different Directions

2129. SHRI UDDHAB BARMAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have since taken any decision to run train services from Guwahati/Dimapur to different directions of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) to (c) With the conversion of Dimapur-Dibrugarh Town section into broad Gauge, it has been decided to extend 2423/2424 New Delhi-Gauwahati Rajdhani Express to Dibrugarh Town on a weekly basis in addition to extension of 4055/4056 Delhi-Dimapur Brahmaputra Mail and 5659/5660 Howrah-Guwahati Kamrup Express to Dibrugarh Town/Tinsukia providing direct services from Tinsukia/Dibrugarh Town via Dimpur to Delhi and Calcutta. Further, Guwahati is already connected to various parts of the country including Jammu Tawi, Mumbai, Trivandrum and Bangalore by direct trains.

Transportation of Goods

2130. SHRI BAJU BAN RIYAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the fact that due to irregular supply of Metre Gauge wagons, transportation of the commodities from Assam to Tripura is being hampered several times resulting in rise in prices of essential commodities in Tripura; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to supply adequate number of metre gauge wagons for transportation of goods from Assam to Tripura?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) and (b) The transportation from Assam to Tripura by rail is often affected due to peculiar law and order problem, agitation, bandhs, accidents, land slides, etc. in the North Eastern Region. Inspite of these factors, railways have maintained steady supply of essential commodities to Tripura. The movement is closely monitored at various levels for this purpose.